Participation of Small/Medium Sectors in Telecommunications Services

213. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Governments have laid down any guidelines for participation of the medium/small scale sector vis-a-vis the major participators in the development of Telecommunication sector;

(b) if so, what are these and if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) in what manner the normal growth of the medium and small scale sectors is sought to be ensured in the process of their participation in the privatisation/ liberalisation programmes; and

(d) the financial/technical supports being provided to the medium/small scale sector, to ensure that the benefits or gains of the liberalisation policy percolate down to them.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) to (d) All small scale/medium scale sector units are free to participate in Tenders issued by the Department of Telecom. The Department is following the guidelines of the Ministry of Industry about concessions to be given to the small scale industries. Various concessions being given to the small scale industries registered with NCIC in the tenders for purchase of equipment are:

(i) Issue of free tender documents.

(ii) Exemption from submission of earnest money in Tenders.

(iii) Exeption from submission of performance security.

In addition, Ministry of Industry and various Banks also provide technical and financial assistance to small scale industries.

U.S. Suggestion on India's Prithvi Missile Programme

214. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that USA has criticized India's Prithvi missile programme and has asked to abandon it forthwith; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of Government over the US suggestion?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Following the test firing of Prithivi on 27 January, 1996, the US State Department Spojkesman reiterated the US view that "the deployment or acquisition of ballistic missiles by India or Pakistan would be destablizing and that deployment of ballistic missiles would undermine the security of both India and Pakistan". He stated the US position that "the deployment of ballistic missiles, the test firing of ballistsic missiles, the acquisition of this kind of technology, is not a good idea". He added that the US urges both India and Pakistan to "forego any kind of ballistic missiles development programme"

Government have stated that there is no question of abandoning the Prithvi programme. Government remain committed to a policy of determining the course of India's missile programme on the basis of India's national security requirements.